

*Merfield Urban District Council.*

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Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year  
1896.



# To the Mirfield Urban District Council.

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1896.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour once more of presenting you with the Report of the number of Births registered in your District for the year ; also the number of Deaths, their causes, &c. ; with the amount of preventable Sickness, occurring during the same time ; and an account of Sanitary work done by the Council, the Medical Officer, and the Sanitary Inspector.

### Population.

I am estimating the population at 12,600 for 1896. There are now 2,800 inhabited houses (your Collector informs me there are scarcely 12 empty houses in the District), which calculating  $4\frac{1}{2}$  persons to each house gives us the number of 12,600. The census of 1891 gave us 4.4 to each house, and as the making of the new railway has brought in a good many men who are lodging in the place, I have thought 4.5 not too high a figure to take for each household.

### Births.

During the year 239 births have been registered—114 males, 125 females. The birthrate being at the rate of 18.96 per 1,000. In the tabulated list given below you will see the numbers for the last twelve years, also that it is 38 below the average of the last ten years :—

In 1885	...	300	In 1889	...	270	In 1893	...	308
„ 1886	...	307	„ 1890	...	270	„ 1894	...	256
„ 1887	...	337	„ 1891	...	261	„ 1895	...	262
„ 1888	...	308	„ 1892	...	263	„ 1896	...	239

I asked the Registrar if he thought all the Births were being registered, he replied “ he thought they were,”

### Deaths.

229 deaths have been registered during the year, 122 males, 107 females, the deathrate being at the rate of 18.17 per 1000.

### Non-residents, &c.

There have been 5 deaths of non-residents occurring in the district during the year. Two from Ravensthorpe who died at the Memorial Hospital ; two from Thornhill ; the other was a stranger working on the new railway. 4 out of these 5 deaths were caused by violence. On the other hand 7 persons belonging to Mirfield have died outside our district viz : 5 (1 male 4 females) at the Dewsbury Union Workhouse, and 2 (males) at the Wakefield Asylum. This brings the number of deaths to 231 and alters the deathrate from 18.17 to 18.33

Tabulated list of deaths since 1888 according to age as requested by the Local Government Board—

						1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	T'tls	
Ages of the deaths.	Under 1 year	...	...	...	...	48	49	42	42	66	43	41	38	44	413	
	1 year and under 5 years	...	...	...	...	26	44	32	39	15	20	24	26	39	265	
	5 years	"	15	"	...	15	18	8	15	7	13	10	11	17	114	
	15	"	"	25	"	...	11	9	17	13	15	21	8	18	127	
	25	"	"	60	"	...	60	48	51	78	49	64	61	72	61	544
60	"	and upwards.			...	36	59	67	72	64	47	38	45	50	478	
Totals						...	196	227	217	259	216	202	195	200	229	1941



You will see from the foregoing list that the deaths of persons under 25 years of age, in each period are above the figures for 1895, more especially in regard to infants under one year and children under 5 years. Out of the total number of 1941 deaths in 9 years, 678 have been children under 5 years of age—413 of these were infants under one year, 265 of one year and under 5 years. With regard to the health of young children we must take into account the inability of the children of the poor to battle with disease; but still much might be done by proper feeding during infancy, and greater care exercised in keeping very young children from infection.

#### Infants.

We must now pass on to the returns for 1896. 44 deaths of infants under 1 year (29 males, 15 females) as against 38 in the previous year; only one of these died from any of the Zymotic class (viz. Scarlet Fever). I cannot see how we can effectually control the infant mortality until the mothers learn how to properly feed their children. We also must bear in mind in considering this mortality that some of the infants only survived their birth only a few hours, while 10 did not live beyond 14 days, and 6 others beyond the month. The infant deathrate is 3.49 per 1,000 deaths, and 184.10 per 1,000 births registered.

#### Phthisis.

This disease has carried off 15 persons, one being a resident from Ravensthorpe reduces the number to 14, as against 19 in 1895. I give below the number of deaths from this disease during the last 7 years:—

In 1890	...	25 deaths.	In 1893	...	20 deaths.	In 1895	...	19 deaths.
" 1891	...	15 "	" 1894	...	27 "	" 1896	...	14 "
" 1892	...	16 "						

The Phthisical deathrate for the year is 1.11 per 1,000, and 4 deaths less than the average of the last 7 years.

#### Pneumonia, Pleurisy, & Bronchitis.

34 persons, of whom 14 were children under 5 years of age, have succumbed to these 3 diseases during the year. This compares very favorably with the last 7 years, as will be seen by the table below:—

In 1890	...	46 deaths.	In 1892	...	56 deaths.	In 1895	...	44 deaths.
" 1891	...	79 "	" 1893	...	52 "	" 1896	...	34 "
(Influenza year.)			" 1894	...	43 "			

#### Influenza.

This Fever did not visit us during the year.

#### Deaths not certi- fied.

There have been no uncertified deaths during the year, inquests being held instead.

#### Inquests.

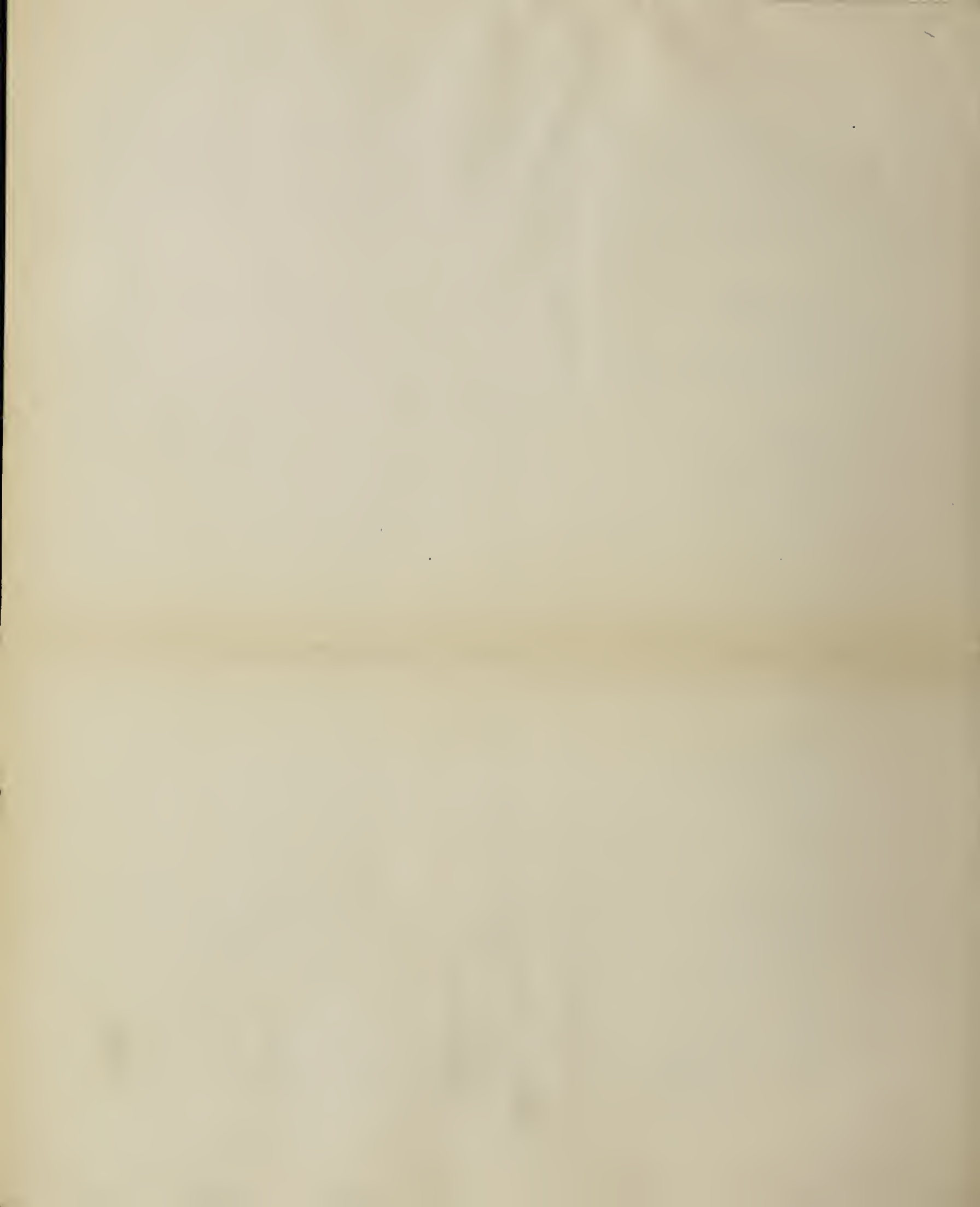
17 Inquests have been held during the year on persons who have died suddenly either from injury or disease, as against 20 in 1895. Three were held in January—one on a child nearly 2 years old, death supposed to have been caused by Pneumonia; another on a child aged 5 years, death supposed to be from Enteritis; the other was a resident from Thornhill, killed by a wagon running over him. Two were held in March—one on an infant aged 8 months, from Convulsions; the other on a man aged 74, death supposed to be due to Heart Disease. Three in April—one on a man aged 46 years, death being due to Heart Disease; another on a man from Ravensthorpe, injured by the upsetting of a cab; another on a girl about 15 years, who had been ailing for 2 or 3 weeks without medical attendance. One in May on a man fatally injured by falling over a wall. Two in June—one on a man from Thornhill, death by drowning; the other on an infant fatally injured by falling down stairs. One in July on a man about 58 years dying suddenly after working in the hay field, death supposed to be due to Heart Disease. Three in August—one on a man working on the new railway, head injured by stone while blasting rock; another on a man who hanged himself; another on a child nearly 7 years old, who accidentally fell into the river. Two in November—one on a man aged 59 years, death supposed to be due to Bronchitis and Heart Disease; the other on a woman who accidentally fell into the Lock during a dense fog. As I mentioned in my Report last year, it would be much better to have Post-Mortem examinations on most of the cases of sudden death from disease, as by this means alone can certainty as to the cause be assured.



## Occupation.

I thought it would be very instructive to pick out of the death returns the following particulars, viz. the Age, Occupation, and Disease, and see if we can ascertain if any special employment be more injurious to life than another. I do not think that one year's returns will by itself do much; its value will be enhanced if carried out each year, and then comparing them. This year I will go no further than draw your attention to the occupation of those who have died from Phthisis or Consumption, as follows:—Coal Miner aged 19, Colliery Banksman aged 42, Railway Engine Cleaner aged 23, Wood Sawyer aged 37, Wood Turner aged 39, Farmer aged 51, 2 Woollen Weavers (females) ages 26 & 17, 1 Woollen Weaver (male) aged 36, 1 Dressmaker aged 22.

OCCUPATION.	AGE.	DISEASE.
Woollen Spinner (Male) ...	At 31 years.	... Acute Pneumonia.
Coal Merchant ...	" 60 "	... Acute Hepatic Congestion.
Grocer ...	" 68 "	... Heart Disease.
Grocer and Post Master ...	" 82 "	... Old Age
Handloom Cloth Weaver (Male) ...	" 73 "	... Softening of Brain.
Card Cleaner in Woollen Mill ...	" 54 "	... Gastric Ulceration & Congestion of
" " " ...	" 38 "	... Pneumonia & Apoplexy. [Lungs.
" " " ...	" 39 "	... Diarrhoea & Vomiting.
Coal Miner ...	" 47 "	... Bronchitis, Pneumonia.
" " " ...	" 19 "	... Phthisis <del>Pulmonalis</del> <i>Pulmonalis</i>
Colliery Banksman ...	" 42 "	... Acute Pneumonic Phthisis.
Plasterer ...	" 46 "	... Heart Disease.
Cloth Dyer ...	" 23 "	... Epilepsy.
Cloth Presser ...	" 51 "	... Heart Disease.
Waterman ...	" 68 "	... Chronic Bronchitis.
Boatman ...	" 58 "	... Cancer of Lung.
" " " ...	" 45 "	... Suicide. Unsound Mind.
Stone Quarryman ...	" 63 "	... Heart Failure.
Stone Mason ...	" 37 "	... Bronchitis, Heart Disease.
Mason ...	" 21 "	... Ulceration of Throat.
Manufacturer (retired) ...	" 69 "	... Apoplexy.
Railway Contractor's Foreman ...	" 60 "	... Bronchitis.
" Navy ...	" 36 "	... Killed.
River Ferryman ...	" 52 "	... Pneumonia.
Butcher ...	" 44 "	... Hyperæmia of Liver.
Traveller ...	" 36 "	... Progressive Muscular Atrophy.
Agent ...	" 63 "	... Heart Disease.
Cotton-Reeler ...	" 15 "	... Inquest.
Railway Goods Guard ...	" 31 "	... Pneumonia.
Railway Engine Cleaner ...	" 23 "	... Phthisis <del>Pulmonalis</del> <i>Pulmonalis</i> .
Wood Sawyer ...	" 37 "	... Pneumonic Phthisis.
Farmer ...	" 78 "	... Old Age.
" " " ...	" 51 "	... Pneumonic Phthisis.
Cloth Fuller ...	" 68 "	... Chronic Bronchitis.
Railway Agent ...	" 55 "	... Cirrhosis of Kidney, Heart Disease.
Rate Collector ...	" 73 "	... Heart Disease.
Wood Turner ..	" 39 "	... Phthisis, <del>Pulmonalis</del> <i>Pulmonalis</i> .
Wood Carpenter ...	" 79 "	... <del>Embolism</del> <i>Embolism</i> , Heart Disease.
Joiner and Butcher ...	" 58 "	... Heart Disease.
Coachman ...	" 66 "	... Gastritis and Septicæmia.
General Labourer ...	" 77 "	... Apoplexy, General Decay.
Road Labourer ...	" 62 "	... Bronchitis.
" " " ...	" 61 "	...
Mason's " ...	" 60 "	...
Farm " and Gardener ...	" 86 "	... Senile Decay.
Blanket Weaver ...	" 76 "	... Hemiplegia, Old Age.
" " (Female) ...	" 26 "	... Heart Disease.
Woollen " (Male) ...	" 59 "	... Sudden Death. Cardiac? or Bronchitis?
" " (Female) ...	" 26 "	... Pneumonic Phthisis.



OCCUPATION.	AGE.	DISEASE.
Woollen Weaver (Female) ...	Æt 17 "	... Pneumonic Phthisis.
" " (Male) ...	" 36 "	... " " and Enteritis.
Dress Maker ...	" 22 "	... Pneumonic Phthisis.
Tailoress ...	" 39 "	... Cancer.
Retired Engine Man at Mill ...	" 74 "	... Sudden Death.
Retired Railway Plate Layer ...	" 73 "	... Heart Disease.
Wheelwright ...	" 46 "	... Hemiplegia. <i>Cystitis</i>
Blacksmith ...	" 69 "	... Enlarged Prostate <i>Cystitis</i> &c.
Beamer in Woollen Mill ...	" 52 "	... Bright's Disease.
Schoolmistress ...	" 43 "	... Typhlitis, &c.
Wire Worker ...	" 57 "	... Carcinoma.

Zymotic.

The deaths due to Zymotic disease are 47. This is above the average due more especially to 2 diseases viz: Scarlet Fever and Measles. The former is scarcely ever absent, and the latter was very prevalent during the spring in the Northorpe part of the district. I will allude again to this matter when treating of Notification. You will see by the following table that these two Fevers are responsible for a great loss of life, and that Measles predominates. After these Fevers, Whooping Cough claims the next greatest number of deaths. Children suffering from this complaint are not kept in the house unless very ill, and are also allowed to go to school and play with healthy children. The Zymotic deathrate is 3.73 per 1,000, as against 1.5 for 1895.

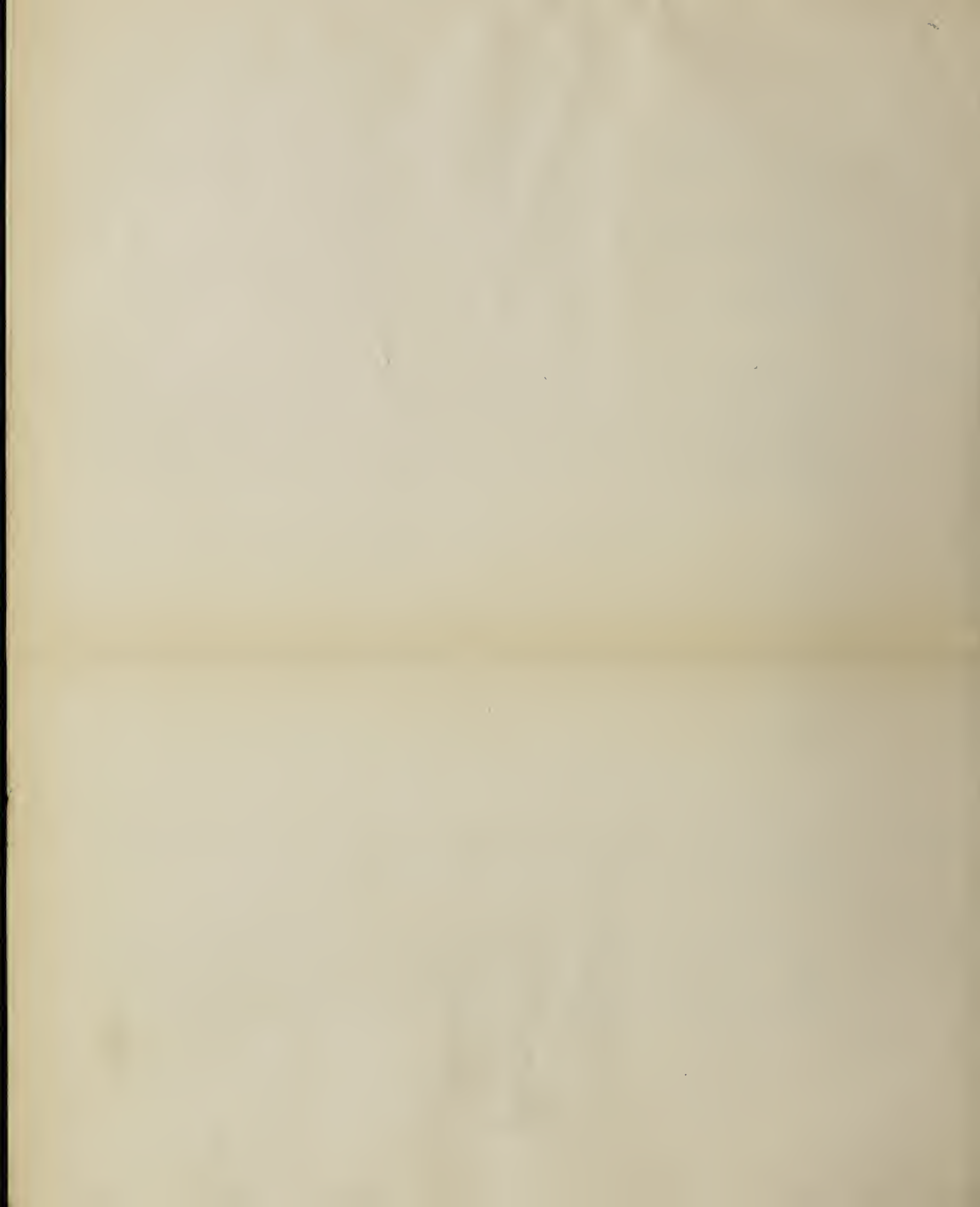
	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	Total.
Smallpox	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Scarlet Fever	8	11	7	0	2	1	3	0	1	13	46
Measles	5	0	22	0	11	0	0	0	10	15	63
Typhoid Fever	3	2	3	2	4	0	2	0	0	2	18
Continued Fever	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	1	7
Diarrhœa	1	1	2	0	2	3	7	4	4	2	26
Diphtheria	0	1	3	5	6	0	0	3	2	4	24
Membranous Croup	0	0	1	6	2	1	0	1	1	1	13
Erysipelas	0	0	2	1	3	3	0	1	0	0	10
Pycæmia	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Puerperal Fever	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
Whooping Cough ...	3	4	12	5	3	5	4	6	0	8	50
Total	20	19	53	19	37	17	17	16	18	47	263

Drainage.

I must thank the Council for under-taking the extension of their drainage through a large and populous part of the District, viz: (Battyeford) which when thoroughly completed by the house connexions, should materially add to the healthiness of the inhabitants. While on the subject of drainage, I think it would be very advisable if all openings on the manholes were closed, in the neighbourhood of Cottages, and where children congregate to play. The stench from them is often very bad and very injurious to health.

Water.

I feel I should be neglecting my duty if I did not once again draw your attention to this matter. During the year the quantity of water has been very abundant, but the quality has often been very unsatisfactory. It has often been very dirty and never fit to drink unless filtered. It has also had a solvent action on Lead; after all the promises the Huddersfield Corporation gave us when we visited them last Summer, I was led to hope they were really in earnest about giving us a Water we could drink with safety but I am sorry to say that in its present condition it is quite unfit for drinking or cooking purposes.



## Infectious Diseases Notification Act.

We will now consider the question of preventable sickness, which with the exception of Measles and Whooping Cough is brought to our notice by means of the adoption of the Infectious Diseases Notification Act, which has been in force nearly 7 years. The following table will shew you the number of cases occurring each year since the Act was adopted, also the number ending fatally :—

			1890		1891		1892		1893		1894		1895		1896	
			Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
Smallpox	...	...	0	0	0	0	11	1	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Scarlet Fever	...	...	10	0	41	2	23	1	39	3	13	0	32	1	339	13
Diphtheria	...	...	8	4	16	6	5	0	0	0	6	3	8	2	26	4
Membranous Croup	...	...	6	5	3	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	4	1
Typhoid Fever	...	...	13	4	4	4	2	0	3	2	3	0	17	0	14	2
Continued Fever	...	...	0	0	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Puerperal Fever	...	...	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Erysipelas	...	...	4	1	11	3	16	3	4	0	10	0	9	0	10	0
Cholera	...	...	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	...	...	41	14	79	20	60	7	55	6	34	5	68	4	394	22

You will see from the foregoing that in 1890 there were 14 deaths from 41 cases or 1 death in 2.95.

In 1891—20 deaths in 79 cases, or 1 death in 3.95.

„ 1892—7 „ 60 „ 1 „ 8.57.

„ 1893—6 „ 55 „ 1 „ 9.16.

„ 1894—5 „ 34 „ 1 „ 6.98.

„ 1895—4 „ 68 „ 1 „ 17.0.

„ 1896—22 „ 394 „ 1 „ 17.90.

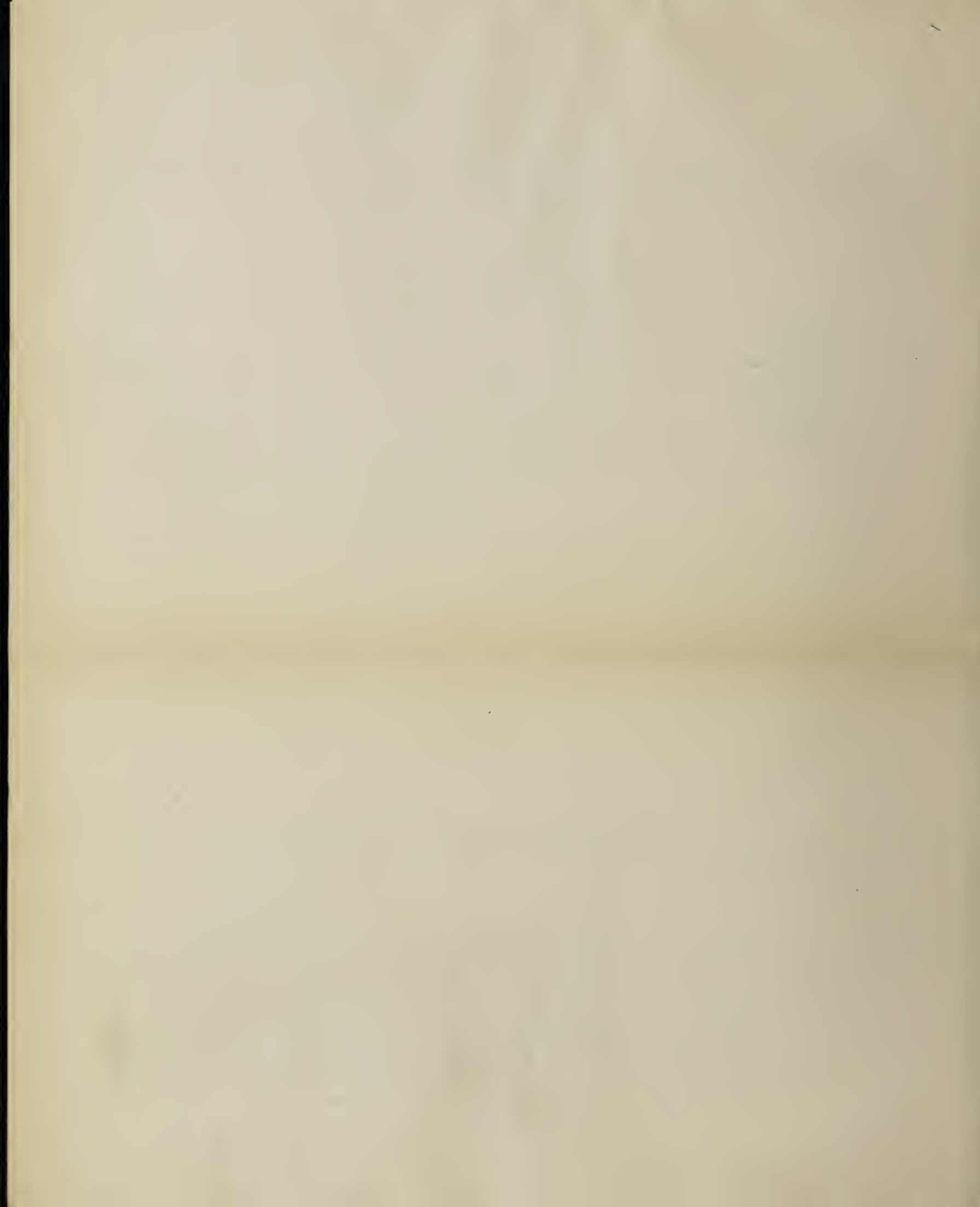
The above figures I think clearly prove that since the Infectious Notification Act was adopted, the percentage of deaths from these diseases has steadily decreased; due, I feel convinced, in a great measure to the free use of Disinfectants in the infected house, also to the daily disinfecting of the drains, which is continued as long as the illness lasts, and which, though costing the Council a good round sum of money, has resulted in a very great saving of life. The expense has been especially great this year owing to the long continuance of Scarlet Fever amongst us.

Smallpox.

There have been no cases during the year. The neglect of vaccination which is increasing year by year in this District, will some day lead to results which will be felt very seriously amongst us, not only by the sufferers from Smallpox themselves, but also by the Council through the great expense entailed in stamping out the disease.

Scarlet Fever.

This Fever has been very prevalent during the year. In my monthly reports you were kept well informed of the cases, also of the different localities affected. The disease appeared in January in both Upper and Lower Hopton and New Scarbro', thence spreading more or less over the whole Parish, the numbers increasing in September and October in Lee Green and Towngate. The great majority of the cases were mild ones, consequently great difficulty was experienced in keeping the infected children from mixing with the healthy ones. It is only by the early isolation of first cases that an epidemic can be avoided. I feel sure in my own mind, taking into account that we are scarcely ever free from this disease, that one cause lies in a great measure in the want of proper drainage on many of the Farms, some of them, in fact most of them, being in a primitive condition. Also I think it a dangerous practice to manure



grass land when cattle are grazing upon it or likely to do so soon afterwards. Again, further danger is incurred by the too close proximity of the middens to the farm buildings, and when these are cleared the stench permeates the whole of the buildings, poisoning the milk.

{ Diphtheria &  
Membranous  
Croup.

There have been 30 cases of these diseases, viz: 26 of Diphtheria and 4 of Membranous Croup; 11 of these were children under 5 years of age. There were 5 fatal cases, 4 from Diphtheria and 1 from Membranous Croup; 3 of these deaths were children under 5 years of age. 8 of the cases occurred in January, 8 in February, 1 in March, 2 in April, 2 in May, 5 in June, 1 in August, 2 in October, 1 in November. The largest number of cases occurred in Upper Hopton, East-thorpe came next, the remainder being more or less sporadic cases in other parts of the District. In 1895 there were 9 cases and 3 deaths.

{ Typhoid &  
Continued  
Fever.

14 cases and 2 deaths (as compared with 18 cases and no deaths in 1895). This disease appeared in the following parts of the district:—3 in February—1 being at Upper Hopton, another at West Mills, and the other at the Clough, Battysford. 1 in March at Wasp Nest. 4 in April—1 at the Reformatory School, the other 3 at Wasp Nest. 1 in September at Northorpe. 3 in October—2 at Northorpe, the other at Old Bank Road. 2 in December—1 at Northorpe, and 1 at Lower Hopton. This Fever never showed any signs of becoming epidemic. There has also been one death from Continued Fever at Upper Hopton.

Puerperal Fever.

There has been 1 case, a fatal one.

Measles.

There have been 15 deaths from this disease during the year, against 10 in 1895. It appeared in March at the Knowl. I fortunately soon heard of the outbreak and advised the closing of St. Peter's Infant School, which was done at once, this had the desired effect of checking the epidemic. In April we however had another outbreak of a much more severe type, in the Northorpe part of the District, resulting in 10 deaths during the month. This attack seemed to come from Dewsbury and Ravensthorpe or Heckmondwike. The Northorpe Infant Schools were also closed, but not with such good results as at Knowl, for not only was the disease more virulent <sup>at the same time</sup> as I did not hear of the outbreak soon enough. I think the Council can assist me very materially to obtain earlier information of the first cases arising in the District. There are two or three ways by which this may be done:—1st As in the case of St. Peter's School.—The Schoolmistress came to my house and informed me she had several scholars absent suffering from Measles; the Schools were at once closed, the attack soon ceased, with I believe only 1 death; e.g.—To authorize the School Teachers to inform me of the first case occurring amongst their scholars, by letter, and to pay them for the information. 2nd—Or the School Attendance Officer to inform me; but he I believe only goes round to the Schools once a week—a week of very valuable time lost; so that I would scarcely advise this. 3rd—For the Medical man to notify any cases that he is attending, and to pay him 2/6 for each house, (not for each case as in the other Fevers, which come under the Notification Act), this fee to last for all cases in that house for one month; this I believe is done in many districts. How to obtain the earliest information of an outbreak of this disease is a very important matter, and one I want you to consider and deal with.

Whooping Cough.

8 deaths from this disease as against *nil* in 1895:—1 in June at Lee Green. 1 in September at New Scarbro'. 2 in October—1 at Nickhouse, the other at Snakehill. 3 in November—1 at Lower Hopton, 1 at Little Moor, 1 at New Scarbro'. 1 in December at Little Moor. This is a disease which with ordinary care should not be fatal.

Erysipelas.

10 cases, no death, as against 9 cases and no death in 1895.



## Infectious Hospital.

During the year progress has been made with the Hospital at Crossley. This has not been very rapid as these Hospitals are very expensive affairs. I am not surprised at the Council not being in a very great hurry to have it opened ; but still it is necessary, if we are to cope successfully with the Infectious Diseases, that it should now be completed with as little delay as is possible.

During the year I have made several visits with your Sanitary Inspector, to houses where overcrowding was supposed to exist ; a few were decidedly overcrowded. We also visited several Farms, more especially on the Hopton side, finding the Drainage very deficient. I hope before this year is over, nearly all of these defects will have been remedied ; I know some of them are already in a better condition.

In conclusion I beg to thank your Surveyor and Inspector for very valuable help so generously given me at all times,

I am, Gentlemen.

Your Obedient Servant,

THOS. B. FAIRCLOUGH,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

*May 3rd, 1897.*

